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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Shoals committee recognizes businesses that employ people with disabilities

Muscle Shoals – The Shoals Area Committee on Employment of People with Disabilities will hold its annual Disability Employment Awards Luncheon on Thursday, Oct. 2 at the Hospitality House at Northwest Shoals community College in Muscle Shoals.

The event honors businesses that provide opportunities for successful employment for people with disabilities and recognizes the success and contributions of individuals with disabilities in the workforce. It is part of a number of special events around the state that is observing October as National Disability Employment Awareness Month. This year's theme is "America's People, America's Talent...America's Strength!"

"Having individuals with disabilities in the workplace is good for the employer as well as the individual," said Byron White, interim coordinator for the October recognition events. "Companies report that employees with disabilities have better retention rates, and they consistently rate workers with disabilities as average or above average in performance, attendance, and safety."

Having individuals with disabilities in the workplace is also good for the economy, said White.

"For each \$1 that is spent on successfully rehabilitating an individual, \$21.95 is returned to the economy through his or her employment," White said.

The Shoals Area Committee on Employment of People with Disabilities is affiliated with the Alabama Governor's Committee on Employment of People with Disabilities, programs of the Alabama Department of Rehabilitation Services (ADRS).

Evon Black, who has been deaf for most of her life, will be the keynote speaker at the luncheon. For more than 21 years, she has been a performer, trainer and motivational speaker. She is currently the coordinator of technology services for Deaf Services with ADRS.

The luncheon will be catered by Whole Hog Express. Pre-registration for the luncheon by Monday, Sept. 29 is \$15. Regular registration is \$20. Limited scholarships are available to individuals with disabilities. For more information or to pre-register, call Dawn Huntzinger, at the Alabama Department of Rehabilitation Services at (256) 314-6211.

The mission of ADRS is to enable Alabama's children and adults with disabilities to achieve their maximum potential. In fiscal year 2007, the department assisted 7,802 Alabamians with disabilities in becoming successfully employed.

The Alabama Governor's Committee on Employment of People with Disabilities was created in the late 1940's by Gov. Jim Folsom as a response to veterans with disabilities who returned home and found no work available. Since that time, many individuals with disabilities, both veterans and civilians, have received the benefit of activities of the Governor's Committee. The committee coordinates a network of local volunteer groups throughout the state and works closely with ADRS staff to develop employment opportunities and raise awareness of the needs and rights of Alabamians with disabilities.